

on human rights which must be buttressed by expanded cultural ties and educational opportunities.

The advocacy of a strong United States Ambassador coupled with the collective efforts of the American people and numerous nongovernmental organizations can do much to foster greater Vietnamese respect for international norms in the areas of human rights, democracy, and religious freedom.

Finally, approving the nomination of Congressman Peterson as Ambassador to Hanoi will greatly assist efforts already underway to advance United States economic interests in Vietnam and throughout Southeast Asia. Vietnam has made significant progress toward transforming its inefficient centrally planned economy to a market-based economy, and it is actively seeking foreign participation in its economic development. Vietnam's efforts to rebuild its infrastructure and modernize its economy present great opportunities for United States businesses in the areas of energy, telecommunications, health, education, tourism, and environmental protection. But for United States firms to compete successfully with the numerous foreign companies already doing business in Vietnam, the administration must negotiate and Congress must approve a comprehensive bilateral trade agreement. As Ambassador, Peterson will play a central role in expediting negotiations on an agreement which will safeguard U.S. commercial interests in the fastest growing region of the world.

There are some who have speculated about the administration's motives for normalizing relations with Vietnam at this time, questioning whether officials from the Lippo Group or other United States businesses with prospective commercial interests in east Asia sought to influence the decision in exchange for their campaign contributions to the Democratic National Committee.

As our colleague, Senator MCCAIN—like Congressman Peterson a former POW—noted at Congressman Peterson's confirmation hearing, "This rumor is entirely unsubstantiated by fact." President Bush and Secretary Baker put the United States firmly on the path toward normalization in 1989 when they drafted a "road map" whose goal was the establishment of full diplomatic relations.

The pace of normalization has actually slowed during the Clinton administration. As Senator MCCAIN stated during the Foreign Relations Committee hearing, the Clinton administration was worried about the political ramifications for the President in making a decision to normalize—with the veterans organizations and others—and was not possessed with concern about helping business interests, whether domestic or foreign.

In short, we have reached the point of preparing to exchange ambassadors because of the bipartisan conviction

that normalizing relations is in our best interests. It had nothing to do with foreign lobbyists or contributions to any Presidential campaign.

Peterson traveled first to Vietnam 30 years ago as an Air force fighter pilot. He served his country nobly, receiving two Silver Stars, several Bronze Stars, and two Purple Hearts. He flew 66 combat missions over Vietnam before his aircraft was downed near Hanoi on September 10, 1966. He then endured almost 7 years of unimaginable hardship as a prisoner of war, before finally returning home in March 1973.

Now he seeks to return to Vietnam, not as a warrior, but as an ambassador of peace, helping to heal old wounds and bring Vietnam into the world community after 30 years of isolation. It is a testament to Congressman Peterson's commitment to public service that he is willing to take on this difficult mission. I wish him God's speed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on the confirmation of the nomination.

Without objection, the nomination is confirmed.

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The President will be notified.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will return to legislative session.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate now go to a period for morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Kentucky is recognized.

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 12 noon, a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Geotz, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 240. An act to amend title 5, United States Code, to provide that consideration may not be denied to preference eligibles applying for certain positions in the competitive service, and for other purposes.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 12:11 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Hays, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

H.R. 412. An act to approve a settlement agreement between the Bureau of Reclamation and the Oroville-Tonasket Irrigation District.

The enrolled bill was signed subsequently by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

At 2:05 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by

Mr. Hays, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1003. An act to clarify Federal law with respect to restricting the use of Federal funds in support of assisted suicide.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and second times by unanimous consent and referred as indicated:

H.R. 240. An act to amend title 5, United States Code, to provide that consideration may not be denied to preference eligibles applying for certain positions in the competitive service, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following measure was read the second time and placed on the calendar:

S. 543. A bill to provide certain protections to volunteers, nonprofit organizations, and governmental entities in lawsuits based on the activities of volunteers.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, which were referred as indicated:

EC-1490. A communication from the Secretary of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on the military capabilities of the People's Republic of China; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-1491. A communication from the Under Secretary of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a violation of the Antideficiency Act, case number 95-12; to the Committee on Appropriations.

EC-1492. A communication from the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, a rule entitled "Indian Country Law Enforcement" (RIN1076-AD56) received on April 4, 1997; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

EC-1493. A communication from the Acting Director of the Office of Surface Mining (Reclamation and Enforcement), Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, three rules including a rule entitled "The Iowa Regulatory Program" (IA-009-FOR, HO-004-FOR, AK-005-FOR); to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-1494. A communication from the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Policy, Management and Budget, transmitting, pursuant to law, an acquisition regulation (RIN1090-AA60) received on April 8, 1997; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-1495. A communication from the Deputy Associate Director for Compliance, Royalty Management Program, Minerals Management Service, Department of the Interior, transmitting, pursuant to law, notice of the intention to make refunds of offshore lease revenues and where a refund or recoupment is appropriate; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

EC-1496. A communication from the Assistant Attorney General, transmitting, a draft of proposed legislation to include American